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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0685
INFO IRAQ COLLECTIVE
HQ COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTH BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001108

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2014

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: SPEAKER BERRI AND SHEIKH QABALAN ON IRAQ
TERRORIST ATTACKS

REF: A. STATE 47118

[1](#)B. BEIRUT 1036

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR VINCENT M. BATTLE FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) AMBASSADOR CONVEYED POINTS IN REF A ON THE TERRORIST
ATTACKS IN IRAQ TO PARLIAMENT SPEAKER (AND SHI'ITE LEADER)
NABIH BERRI MARCH 4. BERRI, WHO PUBLICLY DENOUNCED THE
ATTACKS FROM DAMASCUS ON MARCH 2 (REF B), SAID THAT "INSIDE
THE ROOMS" OF INFLUENTIAL SHI'A LEADERS, THERE IS AGREEMENT
THAT THE ATTACKS IN IRAQ CAME FROM OUTSIDE. BERRI MENTIONED
THE TALIBAN AND AL-QAEDA SPECIFICALLY. HE NOTED THAT IRAQI
SHI'ITE LEADER SISTANI DID NOT BLAME THE AMERICANS FOR THE
ATTACKS, BUT "FOR THEIR FAILURE TO CLOSE THE BORDERS SOONER."

[1](#)2. (C) BERRI SAID THAT SISTANI IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE
POSSIBILITY OF REVENGE ATTACKS AND ESCALATING SUNNI/SHI'A
SECTARIAN VIOLENCE. BERRI EMPHASIZED THAT CONFLICT BETWEEN
IRAQ'S SUNNI AND SHI'A COMMUNITIES WOULD NOT REMAIN CONFINED
TO IRAQ, BUT THAT IT WOULD SPREAD "TO LEBANON, SYRIA, FOR
SURE TO SAUDI ARABIA, OF COURSE IN BAHRAIN, EVEN IN KUWAIT,
AND IT HAS ALREADY STARTED IN PAKISTAN."

[1](#)3. (C) BERRI STRESSED THAT THOSE WHO CARRIED OUT THE ATTACKS
ARE "MUSLIM IN FORM ONLY," SAYING THAT "THEY WANT TO DO
NOTHING BUT KILL." HE COMPARED ASHURA TO GOOD FRIDAY FOR
CATHOLICS AND SAID THAT ASHURA IS SOMETHING SACRED THAT EVEN
SUNNIS ACCEPT IN CONCEPT, IF NOT IN FORM. BERRI CLAIMED THAT
THE TIMING OF THE INCIDENT, SHORTLY AFTER SISTANI AGREED TO
DELAYED ELECTIONS AND THE CREATION OF AN IRAQI GOVERNING
DOCUMENT, WAS AN ATTEMPT "TO KILL THAT PROGRESS." BERRI
URGED THE USG TO WORK HARDER TO RECREATE AND REBUILD THE
IRAQI ARMY AND SECURITY FORCES, REITERATING HIS CRITICISM OF
THE DECISION TO DISBAND THE IRAQI ARMY AS PREMATURE.

[1](#)4. (C) AFTER VISITING BERRI, AMBASSADOR WENT TO SEE SHEIK
ABDUL AMIR QABALAN, ACTING HEAD OF THE HIGHER SHI'ITE COUNCIL
IN LEBANON, WHO WAS RECEIVING CONDOLENCES FOR THE IRAQ
ATTACKS. QABALAN SAID THAT THE MASSACRE IN KERBALA WAS
REALLY AIMED AGAINST THE CPA; "THEY CANNOT GET YOU, SO THEY
ATTACK US." HE STRESSED THAT THE U.S. MUST NOT BE LENIENT
WITH THE PERPETRATORS AND ARGUED THAT STRONG SECURITY IN IRAQ
WAS ESSENTIAL.

BATTLE